MEDITATIONS

UPON

RETIREMENT

FROM THE

WORLD.

Occasioned

By a Discourse with a Gentleman,

Who begun to see the vanity of Worldly enjoyments, whereof he had had a very great share, and thought it necessary by despising of them, to secure the interest of his Soul, while there was any time left.

Blessed are they that forsake the World for Heaven, but more blessed are they that find Heaven, before they go out of the World.

There is no more difference between Heaven and the Kingdom of God, than there is between Hell and the Kingdom of Darkness.

Heaven consists, in Vertue, Truth and Light. Hell consists in Vice, Lies, and Darkness Our Saviour leads us the way to Heaven, and the Devil directs people to Hell.

The Reader may consider which of these two he had best to follow.

SOLI DEO GLORIA.

LONDON,

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO HIS

ROYAL-HIGHNESS Prince GEORGE

OF

DENMARK.

THE nearer you are to Crown and Scepter, the more regard you ought to have to Him, whose Vicegerents, Kings and Princes are. By your indifferency about Worldly Affairs, Providence hath disposed you, to despise the World, and to give your Heart to God, who hath unimaginable happiness and contentment ready for those, that with an intire Resignation comply with his Will. If the following Meditations have such an effect upon your Mind, as to strengthen your Love to the Ruler of all Hearts, He will never let you want those Affections of the People, which mark and support a Princes greatness, and I shall certainly see my Wishes and Hopes of the growth and continuance of your Prosperity fulfilled. When you see these present Broils of Europe *make way for great changes in Church and State, remember this Dedication, and believe that God will rescue those that fear, love and trust him, and that you are One of the few great Ones, not to be touched by the general Calamity, which the unusual Earth-Quakes and other Signs of Gods Anger do forebode. Then I shall not scruple to make my self known to you.*

READER.

READER.

ALL those render no small service to God and their Country, that endeavour to help true Christianity to get uppermost. For we would soon have a better Church and State, if People were thoroughly perswaded, that real Prosperity upon Earth depended upon our Care for Heaven. This single Notion well fixed in the generality of minds, would quench many a desire by Factions to disturb the Peace and quiet of the Nation, or to hinder its welfare by cheating the Publick, both of its Treasure and of those Services, which People less wedded to luxury and private interest might render. How far the following Meditations may tend this way, the Christian Reader will judge, who will I hope allow of my Apology for the Stile, when I tell him it is not my Native Language. I hope these Meditations will not have the misfortune to fall into the hands of any, that either think God a slave to the course and Laws of Nature, or that fancy, their Wisdome above Gods Endowments. For such People will conclude me as great an *Euthasiast* as they are either Beasts or Foolish-Wisemen. It is my comfort that I have Witnesses of my Behaviour in the greatest adversity, when I had the fate of the Moneyless, to be disowned almost by every body, and some thought they discharged the duty of Friendship in desiring the Prayers of the Congregation, that my health and understanding might be restored to me. People that do not know of this, will hardly own me a fit Preacher of the obligation of an intire Resignation to Gods will, if they should see me by a wonderfull Providence raised to make some Figure in the World. But as God alone knows how much I have been humbled, so it is in his only Breast how for I shall be exalted.

May *First. Heinrich Wilhelm Ludolf.*
The first of July, *thou shalt have a Commentary.*

MEDITATION I.

THe World is an imperious Miſtreſs, who makes thoſe moſt uneaſie that are fondeſt of her. Which hath induced ſeveral to prefer Retirement before Greatneſs and Splendor in the World, after they have found the emptyneſs of all thoſe things, which men commonly make their Idols. Providence having contrived it ſo wiſely, that whoſoever hath a wrong aim in point of happineſs, is ſooner or latter made ſenſible of his having miſſed the mark: All the miſchief cometh from miſplacing our affections, and from not beſtowing a true value upon the things we are in purſuit after. If we remembred the, *Seek firſt the Kingdom of Heaven*, we would ſoon find fullfilled the, *All things ſhall be added unto you*. Since a hearty concern for a future Life, would make us look with ſo much contempt upon the trifles of this World, that we would hardly ever diſquiet our ſelves with the deſire of any thing, that is not added to us already. But ſuch a Reſignation to Providence requireth perhaps more Religion than is commonly met with in men. However we all pretend to reaſon, and thoſe that are not totally deprived of the right uſe of reaſon, will own that they have an immortal Soul, and that conſequently the ſecuring Eternity to the Soul, is not only the moſt important buſineſs, but that without the hopes of it, our mind will not be free from grudgings very injurious to its quiet and contentment, which influences the health of our Body very much. So that reaſon ſhould tell every man, he muſt look after Heaven, if he will enjoy happineſs upon Earth, which cannot ſubſiſt, without health in the Body and tranquility in the Mind. Gods goodneſs as well as wiſdom having ordered it ſo, that the intereſt of Body, Mind, and Soul is ſo cloſely united together, that a concern for the Soul brings us to the obſerving of our Saviours Rules, and practiſing of thoſe vertues, whereby the vigour of our Body and the contentment of our Minds is promoted; and on the other hand, managing the Body according to the Precepts of Temperance and Sobriety, ſtrengthens our Underſtanding, and inables it to deſcry in Nature and Providence, thoſe glorious Beams of Wiſdome and Goodneſs, which cannot choſe but inflame our deſires of obtaining the favour of that infinite perfect Being. Which deſire, if it be ſincere and earneſt, is half way towards our Souls home. This conſideration alone ſhould be enough to keep any rational man from beſtowing any more value upon the Goods and Pleaſures of this World, than is conſiſtent with a due care of the next. Which if they did, they would not be weary of Earth before they are fitted for Heaven, and even Earthly pleaſures of Body as well as of mind, would be more real, more laſting, and more eaſily attained. They would not be at a loſs where to find retirement and quiet. For in my opinion it is not changing of City or Court for the Country, wherein a quiet Retirement conſiſts, becauſe in the greateſt Solitude, and moſt concealed Receſs our mind may be hurried about with reſtleſs paſſions and deſires; on the other hand, neither the noiſe of the City nor the hurry of the Court, can diſcompoſe a temper well ſettled by not depending upon uncertainties, but intirely relying on Gods Providence, which deſigns nothing but good for us. Though it cannot be denyed, that every body is not ſtrong enough to reſiſt the temptations of City and Court, which wheedle us into wrong courſes.

MEDITATION II.

SInce then Retirement, which is to ſet our mind at eaſe doth not conſiſt in the bare changing of the place of our abode; it ſeems to me, that the ſecret of enjoying quiet and tranquillity of mind, conſiſts only in withdrawing our heart from any thing we are in poſſeſſion of in this World. This is the way to hold Riches, and Honour, nay even that more valuable pleaſure of friendſhip, without the uneaſineſs of fearing to loſe them, or grieving for them, when they give us the ſlip. It is a common obſervation, that Sin and Folly differ but very little, and that the Wiſdome of Providence hath put a ſtraight connexion between Sin and Puniſhment. So that whoſoever forgets his duty to his Creator to ſuch a degree, as to lay him by for the Creature, and to beſtow upon the Creature thoſe affections, which were due only to the Creator; that perſon muſt needs expoſe himſelf to a great many inconveniencies, which by Gods unchangeable Law attend the committing of Sin and Folly. We daily ſee that Wiſe-men make themſelves ridiculous about thoſe Worldly objects, which they moſt dote upon, and never make a worſe uſe of their underſtanding, than when they are buſied about the things they love beſt. Love, as well as other paſſions, leading commonly their Miſtreſs the Reaſon, by the noſe; and the Proverb, *Love is Blind*, is of a larger extent, than to be underſtood only of admiring a Woman. For we ſee Parents, fond of their Children, not only over-value their parts, but by too much indulgence to the humour of their Children, to expoſe themſelves to the juſt cenſures of diſcreet impartial perſons. We meet with bookiſh men puffed up with ſome Philological remarks, that are hiſſed at by men of ſence, and of uſe to either Church or State. Children and Books are queſtionleſs as harmleſs objects of our fancy as any, and yet when our heart is ſet upon them, they eaſily betray our folly, and bring no leſs an inconvenience upon us, than the leſſening of our reputation by having our judgement called in queſtion. As irrational loving of ſenſual pleaſures, Money and Fame is more criminal, ſo it is attended with puniſhment more real, than the bare loſs of the good opinion of men of ſence. I do not ſpeak only of men that purſue theſe things by the commiſſion of the moſt provoking ſins, but even of thoſe that hunt after them in ſome ſeeming honeſt courſe. A man may endeavour to grow rich, without Robbing and Cheating, another may offer at Greatneſs without Slandering or Supplanting, and yet both theſe men will find themſelves miſtaken at the long run, if they make this their chief buſineſs, and it is a Mercy of God, when he ſhews them their error, and directs them to look after that which muſt render the injoyment of plenty and greatneſs ſecure and comfortable. This cannot be obtained unleſs a body be ſure of Gods favor and ſupport, but it is not probable that God Almighty will aſſure a man of ſo great a bleſſing, unleſs he thinks it worth the longing for it, which he is not like to do, as long as his mind chiefly runs upon worldly things. Wherefore I conclude that withdrawing our heart from worldly things, is the true retirement, which leads us to calmneſs of mind, and keeps us from being diſturbed, in the City and Court as well as in the Country. Nay it will beget that love and truſt in God, which makes Proſperity the more comfortable and adverſity the leſs uneaſie, and when our croſſes ſeem to overballance too much our comforts, this ſort of Retirement will make us amends for all, by a promiſing proſpect of our future hopes.

MEDITATION III.

IT is, I muſt confeſs, not ſo very eaſie, to withdraw our heart from the world; for it is hard to blot out the impreſſions made upon our minds in our younger years. One that alwayes heard people admired for a great Eſtate, for a ſplendid Houſe-keeping and magnificent Furniture and Retinue, will be backward to believe that all thoſe things ſignifie nothing, and are not worth our ſeeking them. We hear Great Men ſo often reckoned among the fortunate, and very often ſee ſo many real advantages of power, that we cannot help almoſt our being betrayed into Ambition. Nay when bountiful Nature hath beſtowed ſo good an underſtanding upon us, as to be convinced, that Wealth and Greatneſs are very empty things without Contentedneſs, there is one object left, from which it is hardeſt of all to withdraw our heart, *that is, We our ſelves*; The wiſe Author of Nature hath implanted in us a love of our being, that we might ſeek to preſerve, and to improve it: And there is no queſtion to be made, but that it would ſtand us in very great ſtead, if we loved our ſelves with a due regard to our glorious *Maker*, for it is more than probable that our *Being* may be improved by him, that contrived it ſo artificially. But when we lay him a ſide, and perhaps do every thing to affront him into the bargain, it is no wonder he ſhould revenge ſo baſe an ingratitude, by ſuffering our *Self love* to lead us as a blind Guide. This perverſe *Self love* begets that uncharitableneſs and envy, from whence ſprings all the ſtrife and faction, which diſturbs ſo very much both publick and private. It intoxicates us with that conceit of our own judgment, that we will hardly allow any body to be in the right but our ſelves, making commonly very peeviſh requitals to thoſe that offer to ſhew us our miſtakes. In one word *Self-love* is the root of Pride, which is ſo criminal a qualification, that it turned *Lucifer* out of Heaven. The inlightened Author of *The Whole Duty Man*, makes very good Remarks upon this ſubject. Nor can it be denyed that the greater the thing is which we are proud of, the greater is our Sin and conſequently the Fall that attends Pride commonly. The miſchief of our being pleaſed with our own perſon is not ſo great, as to think our judgment infallible; and being puffed up with a vain conceit of Saintſhip, is worſe ſtill, and very often occaſions thoſe falſe lights, whereby many a poor ſoul is lead into precipices. The reaſon ſeems to be, that Pride hath ingratitude towards God Almighty at the bottom, for the proud man doth not reflect upon his holding every thing of God Almighty, and the greater his gifts are, the greater is his ingratitude, when he aſcribes them to himſelf. Since then *Self-love* is ſo dangerous, and yet ſo natural to us, we ought to take the more particular care to break ourſelves of that fondneſs of our ſelves, which is the laſt and hardeſt difficulty to be overcome by one, who would fain injoy that Retirement, wherein we are paſt being diſpleaſed with any thing but what diſpleaſes God Almighty.

MEDITATION IV.

SUCH a disengagement of our hearts from all worldly affections fits us for that love of God, whereby we endear our selves to him, and receive those returns from him, which bring us to so much experience of his mercy, that we never despond even under the worst circumstances, but bear the worst lot of his Providence without reluctancy. It would be strange if God Almighty, who hath given so innumerable proofs of his goodness towards us, should look with indifferency upon those that endeavour to answer his design in creating of Man, and endowing him with understanding. If we think we have reason to lessen our kindness for a person, which doth love another besides us. How can we imagine, that Infinite Being should take it well at our hands, when we kindly entertain so despicable Rivals besides him. Many pious persons hold, that God created Man only for a witness to his wonders, to admire and injoy the beauty of the whole Creation; and after Man had by his ingratitude, forfeited so great a bliss, and by his disobedience brought the sad punishment upon him, which hath made his Posterity smart ever since; Yet God was pleased to give still a greater proof of his Love in pittying Mans deplorable condition, and providing a mean for its relief. What is not such an Infinite Goodness like to do for one, who is sensible of so unspeakable a Mercy, and with a due acknowledgement of his unworthiness makes it his utmost care to please his Creator. If we make never so few Christian Reflexions upon the course he takes with us, we will soon find that he courts us for our heart, by all the methods imaginable, and when they do not prevail, he imbitters the enjoyment of those very things which inticed our heart away from him. He doth not deserve so great a favour as affliction, that doth not look upon it, as a design of God Almighty to wean us from those things which rendered us treacherous to him. Our mind must have some thing to delight chiefly in, and which way soever it inclines, there it sticks closer and closer. If it bend towards the world, it will intangle it self faster and faster in it, and remove further and further from God. But if our mind fix once upon God, it will despise the world more and more, and grow in delighting in God Almighty and Heaven. The more our love tends this way, the more our expectations will be answered. Till by degrees it bring us to so straight a union with God, that no Temptation will tear us from him. When God once finds us true to him, he gives us those assurances of his being true to us, that nothing is able to shake us, or to grieve us; till at length we arrive at such an intimacy with him, as to have no other will but his, and to bear with an intire resignation his disposals. Then we begin to see wonders of Wisedome, Goodness, Mercy and Justice, even in those Events, which the world thinks chance, and we will find that the more we seek Heaven the more we find happiness upon Earth, whereas seeking the Trifles of the Earth makes us lose Heaven and doth nothing but inbroil us here upon earth. So that in my opinion it is Prudence as well as Religion, to give our Heart to God and not to the World, than I am sure the Vanity of the World will never make us uneasie, nor puzzle us where to find that tranquillity and cherfullness of mind, which sweetens this life and gives us a foretaste of that which is to come.

MEDITATION V.

FOr fear any body ſhould think theſe Notions inſignificant whims of my own brains. I adviſe to examine, whether they are not agreeable to what was ſaid before by one, whoſe Wiſdom and Truth no Chriſtian can have an exception to, There is ſcarce another ſence to be given to thoſe words of our Saviours, whereby he declared, *That the Love of his Heavenly Father was not in us, as long as we loved the World.* But if people will not mind his Doctrine, how can they wonder at their not finding the Truth and Benefit of it. Withdrawing our heart from the World, and giving it to God, is that forſaking of every thing, which hath the promiſe of an hundred fold recompence. Whereof no body is like to gain a fortunate experience that doth not think it worth his while to attempt a trial of it. Though I am of opinion the truth of my Notions will be called in queſtion by no body who owns the Bible to contain Gods Word. The number indeed of thoſe is far greater, which think it beneath them to ſubmit their underſtanding to Gods Wiſdome, not to ſpeak of thoſe, which count *David* a fool, for calling thoſe Fools, which denyed a God. I will not now incroach upon the province of Divines, and threaten thoſe Sparks with the heavy Judgments, that are like to befal them, or think ſo meanly of my time, as to go about the proving their errors, ſince they admit only of heatheniſh arguments, they may go; thoſe paſſages in *Seneca*, which make Contempt of Riches the great Road towards becoming Rich. And they may learn of *Epicurus*, that ſince mans happineſs conſiſts in pleaſure he muſt needs be moſt happy, whoſe pleaſure is leaſt ſubject to uncertainty, or to taſte as much of Gall as of Hony. My Meditations being deſigned only for the improvement of Chriſtianity. I dare aſſure my ſelf, that any perſon, who will earneſtly endeavour for Chriſts ſake to forſake his Life, will by Gods bleſſing find a far better. I have not been yet in the other World, and cannot ſpeak by experience of what we have to expect there. But I know that forſaking of thoſe courſes which ſet us at a greater and greater diſtance from God, will bring us by degrees to ſuch a life here upon Earth, which is not only free from diſquiet, and fear, but wherein natural pleaſures are eaſie, and even the thought of their loſs moſt pleaſant. I ſhall never be perſwaded to embrace the ſottiſh conceipt of thoſe, that ſuppoſe all the pleaſures of the body, were by the bountiful Creator of the Univerſe, laid only as ſo many ſnares for our Soul, and upon that account deny their bodies not only recreation but neceſſaries. It is too low a fancy to imagine that ſo infinite a goodneſs as that of the Almighty can take delight in making us uneaſie, and I have reaſon to believe, that the infinite liberality of our Creator deſireth nothing of us but a grateful injoyment of what is given, being ſo free to grant the deſires of thoſe that love him, that they can ſcarce thank him heartily for a mercy received, before there is a greater one ready. Though I am afraid there is not over many that have had a full ſence hereof, ſince there is ſo few, that think it worth their while by a real hearty Contempt of the World to offer at a little more familiar acquaintance with Gods goodneſs. My Meditations do not belong to thoſe that had rather live like Beaſts than Men, but thoſe that pay ſome reſpects to Reaſon and Chriſtianity, will be backward to condemn me too raſhly for an *Enthuſiaſt*, eſpecially if they do not meaſure other peoples Corn with their own Buſhel, but have humility enough to ſuppoſe, that by others they may be exceeded in Vertue as well as in Vice, and that conſequently they muſt not think themſelves in poſſeſſion of the greateſt ſhare, of thoſe Bleſſings, which are promiſed to Vertue and Piety, in this Life as well as in the next.

MEDITATION VI.

THis new Life, which it is no paradox to call the beginning of the Eternal one, is so unspeakable a happiness, that no body ought to grudge forsaking the Old one, which St. *Paul* had so contemptible an opinion of, that he did not think it worth the name of Life, when he desired to be delivered of the body of this death. I can give so far an experimental description of it, that it puts a period to those unfortunate jarrings between the *Passions*, *Reason*, and *Faith*, which so desperately disturb a man in the Old life, and all our Faculties within us, do in the new Life their parts with such a sweet harmony, that Reason commands our Appetite and Passions with such an absolute, and yet very indulgent sway, that both Appetite and Passions, afford nothing but Pleasure, and such a Pleasure which leaves no sting behind but increases with the injoyment. Reason on the other hand acts with that humble regard to the Divine Majesty, from whence it had its spring, that it willingly by Faith submits to those unsearchable Mysteries, which must of necessity be far above an understanding, darkened by the general corruption of Mankind. But the more we endeavour by the grace of God to free our selves from that corruption, the more that veil of the eyes of our understandings will fall off, and by degrees God Almighty enables us to see, that *Faith* is no intollerable Mistress to *Reason*, but that the perfection of *Reason* consists, in being convinced of, and in understanding the Truth and Reality of Divine Mysteries. It is true, it would be great presumption in any man by his own forces to recover that perfection, which was forfeited by his Primogenitors ingratitude; But since Gods infinite mercy hath provided the mean of our Mediator for our Restauration, it is the greatest wonder to me, that there can be such wretches, as to neglect and mock that, for which no humane tongue or understanding can find proportionate thanks. I must confess the generality of Christians, is so little behind hand with the *Jews* in despising of our Saviour, that they boggle as much as the *Jews* at the truth of our Saviours asseveration, *That no body ever should see death that kept his Sayings*. But how can any body be inabled to keep those Sayings or Commandments, if he will not take his refuge to him, whose Merit and Intercession must procure us the necessary help for it. Since then Eternal Life, or the beginning thereof, a New Life here upon earth, can be attained to, only by keeping of Christs Sayings, or by following of his Example, it is absolutely necessary, sincerely to desire, and earnestly to attempt the practice of those Vertues which Christ reckoned our blessedness, and made them the Subject of all his discourses, though he knew the World such a stranger to them, that he thought it necessary to bespeak their attention by Similitudes and Parables. I will not waste Time and Paper in summing up and describing the Lovelines and Usefulness of those Vertues, the Practice whereof is, that *Keeping of Christs Commandments*, which he takes as a sign of our belief in, and love of him, for which he hath promised so unimaginable a Reward, that God will love us, come to us and make his abode with us, *Joh.* 14. Those that think our Saviour too plain in recommending of those Vertues, may read the *Whole Duty of Man*, where they are treated of more methodically, and in a stile more sutable to the fashion of these times. But I am afraid there is such a proud stubborn Generation, which would hardly hear one appointed, to speak of GODS WILL, though he should comply with all the fashions of the World, that are not directly opposite to the will of God. For I believe they would think him as far from being a Prophet, because he appeared among the wicked, as the old Prophets were contemned for flying from the wickedness of the World. But God will confound the vain conceit of the World, by not confining his Providence to the notions of humane Wisdome.

MEDITATION VII.

THE damned Pride of humane Wiſedom is indeed come to that paſs, that People will hardly allow the *Almighties Prorogative* by his uncontroulable Providence to manage this World. We have a daily experience of Gods diſappointing the ſubtlety of Mens deſigns, and of embroiling that ſucceſs of the crafty, which Gods unſearchable counſel permits ſometimes. And yet we are generally ſo far from reflecting more upon God than upon our own brains, that we fancy we are able to baffle the diſpoſals of Infinite Power, which I am afraid hath connived long enough to convince us of his extraordinary Mercy, and to keep us from thinking thoſe judgements too ſevere, which it ſeems begin to come upon Earth, and which will very heavily light upon thoſe heads, that have hitherto laughed at the threatnings of *Gods Word*. It is not my task by theſe Meditations to explain the firſt part of the *Lords Prayer*, and to determine what way and how ſoon here upon Earth as well as in Heaven; *Gods Name* is to be hallowed, *Gods Kingdom* to come, and *Gods will to be done*. Thoſe that mind our Saviours Exhortations, will not neglect to endeavour the being in a readineſs for it at all times. Gods mercy hath nevertheleſs extended ſo far as to raiſe of late perſons, underſtanding thoſe dark Paſſages both of the Old and New Teſtament, which ſpeak of the Triumph of goodneſs over wickedneſs. I have ſeen onely ſome writings of Mrs. *Bourignon* and Mr. *Poiret*, but I know there is more perſons acquainted with the nearneſs of that time. But I perceive there is ſcarce any more heed taken of what they ſay or Write, than of *Noah* before the Deluge. It is an unaccountable thing that even thoſe, which own the Bible to come from God, ſhould leſs reflect upon what is contained in it about an univerſal Reign of Juſtice, Peace and Joy; than upon the tricks of the Devil, to turn that Reign into ridicule by ſome Millenarians, ſome Quakers, and ſome Family of Love Men. We are queſtionleſs too preſumptuous of ourſelves, if we ſuppoſe there was no need of our Saviour for warning us againſt the fierceneſs and cheats of the Devil in the latter times. But our Saviours Doctrine is grown ſo deſpicable with the far greater part, that it is thought below a Wit, either to hold that our Saviour is God, or to believe that there is a Devil.

But Great God have thou in thy infinite Mercy a tender compaſſion of thy poor people in this laſt and moſt furious aſſault of the Adverſary, hear the ſighs of thoſe that groan under his Tyranny, and prepare thoſe that fear thee, for thy appearence which thou wilt ſhortly make to avenge the Scorn of thy Onely Son, ſtrengthen the Faith of thoſe thou thinkeſt fit to bring to the fiery Trial, and do not defer long mercifully to fullfil thy decrees about me; for my Redeemers ſake.

FINIS.